Purification through emotions

Purification Through Emotions:

The Role of Shame in Plato's *Sophist* 230b4-e5

Abstract

This article proposes an analysis of Plato's *Sophist* (230b4-e5) that underlines the bond between the logical and the emotional level in the Socratic *elenchus*, with the aim of depicting the social valence of this philosophical practice. The use of emotions characterizing the "*elenctic*" method described by Plato is crucial in influencing the audience and is introduced at the very moment in which the interlocutor attempts to protect his social image by concealing his shame at being refuted. The audience, thanks to Plato's literary strategy, realizes the failures of the interlocutor even as he refuses to accept them. As a result, his social image becomes tarnished. Purification through shame reveals how the medium is strictly related to the endorsement of specific ethical and political goals, making the Platonic dialogues the tools for the constitution of a new *paideia*.

Keywords: Plato; dialogue; shame; elenchus; katharsis

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> (…) car l'opération logique en quoi consiste, pour une part, la réfutation, est clairement suspendue à une finalité morale: l'individu réfuté doit avoir honte de sa propre ignorance, mais il s'agit d'une honte bénéfique, voire salvatrice, puisqu'elle est la première étape de la conversion intérieure qui conduit à la connaissance et, par voie de conséquence, à la vertu et au bonheur. (Dorion, 2000, p. 49)

The thesis presented by this article can be articulated through the following points:

1. Platonic writing has an educational role with respect to the audience: by doing philosophy, Plato educates the citizens, and, in so doing, he does politics;
2. The main instrument for achieving this goal is, in the first dialogues, the Socratic *elenchus*;
3. *Elenchus* operates not only on the rational level, but also on the emotional one. The use of emotions in the cross-examination is an expression of a "rhetorical" use of language which aims at influencing the audience. The *elenchus* is thus a key instrument of "true rhetoric";
4. Shame functions as a transformative experience that is crucial for the "therapeutic" dynamics instantiated by the *elenchus;*
5. Therapy does not involve solely the individual interlocutors, but also, and in some cases mainly, the audience. It is from this perspective that *elenchus* may be said to "spread out".

In order to demonstrate these points I analyze a passage from Plato's *Sophist* (230b4-e5), which illustrates the intertwining of emotions and reasoning, and, more specifically, the central role of emotions in logical-rational processes. Shame, as a psychological mechanism triggered by *elenchus*, can result in two positive outcomes: the interlocutor's cognitive transformation and the audience's purification. I analyze furthermore some passages from Plato's *Gorgias* to explain these dynamics in connection with concealed and manifest shame.

Philosophical Practice

The Greek *logos* is not only a rational discourse but also an affective one: in keeping with this feature, reason and emotions can cooperate in the achievement of knowledge. One main hypothesis underpinning this paper is that Plato was the first philosopher to gain significant insights into the relation between reason and feelings in the cognitive processes. Addressing the interlocutors' emotional level is thereby not only a rhetorical-argumentative strategy (Rossetti 2011), since emotions are the motives that transform knowledge into a life-changing practice via the elenctic procedure. In order to be complete, the process of purification requires a degree of psychological support which can be obtained only by addressing the interlocutor's emotions, and in particular his shame. Therefore, in this case, emotions are not the objects of purification, but its agents. Specifically, passions and reason are connected through *thymos* (Pilote, 2010). I maintain that, for Socrates, *thymos*, as intermediate between passions and reason (Renaut 2014), represents a guide to the Good.

In BLIND (2012a), I argue that the type of knowledge pursued through the Socratic Method must be understood as something able to impact on a person's whole existence. Following this road, philosophical knowledge should not be understood as moved by abstract aims, but it reveals its practical valence as long it concerns every aspect of life and reality. In this regard, not only do we reach knowledge through emotions, but emotions are also the power by means of which knowledge can impact our lives. Pierre Hadot's reading of philosophy as spiritual exercise (Hadot 1993) is very meaningful here, not only for understanding philosophy as a practice, but also for the emphasis on

the epistemic agent's transformation through philosophizing. The novelty of my contribution resides in the recognition of the role of emotions in these transformative practices, and in detecting their efficacy within the Socratic elenchus. Moreover, stressing the public valence of the elenctic purification, it will be possible to grasp the political valence of rthe spiritual exercises. In fact, they will be depicted not only as a solitary philosophical practice, but as something that may belong to the community. Arguably, understanding philosophy as spiritual exercise is relevant not only for the history of ideas, but it may suggest a significant improvement which can be put into practice in contemporary education systems.

As we will see discussing the passage dedicated to the Noble Sophistry, shame will appear as one of the most powerful emotions capable of purifying the agent. This idea may be seen as very problematic nowadays. For example, Martha Nussbaum (2004, 2010, 2013) has rightly underlined the destructive function of this feeling. From her perspective, when used in the attempt to inculcate humiliation, shame produces effects that are too broad and ends up limiting human freedom. As far as contemporary society is concerned, I agree with Nussbaum's interpretation; nevertheless, I will analyze the role that shame plays within the Socratic *elenchus* in order to also understand its positive dimension as tools for purification. In fact, if we take into account only the negative facets of shame, we are interpreting this concept outside its Socratic and Platonic matrix. As it has been stressed by Tarnopolsky (2010), shame is essential to critical thinking, not only because it is an opportunity for self-reflexive practice, but also for the citizens collective deliberation. Thus, I agree with Boghossian (2013) in the recognition of the pedagogical valence of the Socratic method, but I do not see shame as an antagonist of the paideutic aim. The reason is that shame, within the Socratic and Platonic model, is not a tool of humiliation, but of purification. Therefore, the challenge is to figure out how shame could be positively performed today – even taking into account the necessity of reconstructing its meaning within a different semantic field.

Socratic *Elenchus*: Emotions and Reasoning

The Socratic *elenchus* ("refutation") consists in two main moments (Dorion, 2004): 1) the interlocutor's theses are examined, and 2) they are subjected to objections. The process of examination is strictly connected to the elaboration of the objections. The interdependence of these two moments makes the *elenchus* a refutation which aims to generate a positive thesis. The turning point between the confutation and the production of the thesis, which is at the same time a caesura and a connection, consists in the acknowledgment of one's own inadequacy, a sense of inferiority – a situation that is captured by the Greek term *aidos* or *aischyne.*

Within Plato's epistemology, emotions function as the joint[1] that allows the shift from procedure to insight. If the emotion prompting and accompanying such shift is the love of beauty, we will attain knowledge (cf. the *Symposium*); if, on the contrary, shame prevails, we will realize our errors. Even in its negativity, this achievement is not one of pure misery, as it provides us with a motivation to change our lives and, eventually, further the inquiry in order to attain subsequently the Good.

As anticipated, the search for – and generation of – a positive thesis constitutes the second phase of the aforementioned process. Very often, nevertheless, the purification of the interlocutor through the *elenchus* fails to occur, as the interlocutor refuses to be shamed in public. The psychological mechanism of shame is, nonetheless, fundamental for the positive outcome of the *elenchus* (allowing one, namely, to recognize one's own errors and, accordingly, to generate knowledge of the truth), since it provides the interlocutor with the possibility of being ashamed of his inadequacies.

Shame, thus, can support the rational part of the soul in regaining its hegemony over the errors contaminating the soul. As we shall see (section 5), these dynamics are frequently concealed (through the psychological mechanism of the feeling of "shame at being shamed") due to social reasons. In fact, the interlocutor's identity depends on social recognition, namely the social attribution of a role; therefore, the interlocutor can hardly agree to forego this safe foothold by openly admitting his errors.

Arguably, what is at work here is a specific mechanism – what I call "outreach *elenchus*" – which demonstrates the political function of the "rhetorical" power of emotions (BLIND, 2012; BLIND, 2015a). Not only do emotions play an important role within Plato's epistemology and moral psychology, they also perform the fundamental function of delivering a message to the audience. Therefore, when interlocutors try to protect their social image, their standing is unavoidably compromised. More specifically, interlocutors cannot protect their socially ratified identities insofar as, by attempting to do so, they demonstrate their unwillingness to admit their errors. The audience, realizing that the interlocutor does not acknowledge the shortcomings which, thanks to the refutation, emerged clearly in the dialogue, understands that he is not the person he believes himself to be. This mechanism (the outreach elenchus) occurs mainly when the interlocutors are politicians, sophists, and rhetors (Plato's *Gorgias* represents a good example of these dynamics). Finally, emotions collaborate with reason not only to purify the soul, but to deliver a message to the audience: that it is necessary to be aware of the inadequacy of contemporary politicians and teachers. Outreach *elenchus* is thus a tool employed by Plato to achieve a political goal, namely, the exposure of the inadequacies of the Athenian leaders and, thus, enables the purification of the public.

Plato's *Sophist* (230 b4-e5)

It is possible to focus on the "therapeutic" bond between the logical and emotional levels characterizing the Socratic *elenchus* by reading an exemplificative passage of Plato's *Sophist* (230 b-e5). The majority of interpreters, including myself, consider this passage, taken from a dialogue of maturity, as a testimony of the Socratic Method in Plato's first dialogues – even though this thesis has been called into question in various debates relevant to the topic (Kerferd, 1954, pp. 84-90; Trevaskis, 1955, pp. 36-49). The major evidence in support of the thesis – besides the properly Socratic practices which may be identified within the dialogue – is provided by the context of text. The following passages emphasize, in fact, the necessity of distinguishing between different methods that are apparently similar – in our case the dangerous similarity between Socrates and the

Sophists. As the rhetoric used by Plato is the "true rhetoric" (*Gorgias* 504 d3-e3), so the sophistry of the Socratic Method is Noble Sophistry (*Sophist* 231 b8-9).

> STRANGER: They cross-examine a man's words, when he thinks that he is saying something and is really saying nothing, and easily convict him of inconsistencies in his opinions; these they then collect by the dialectical process, and placing them side by side, show that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things, and the same respect. He, seeing this, is angry with himself, and grows gentle towards others, and thus is entirely delivered from great prejudices and harsh notions, in a way which is most amusing to the hearer, and produces the most lasting good effect on the person who is the subject of the operation. For even as the physician considers that the body will receive no benefit from taking food until the internal obstacles have been removed, so the purifier of the soul is conscious that his patient will receive no benefit from the application of knowledge until he is refuted, and from refutation learns modesty; he must be purged of his prejudices first and made to think that he knows only what he knows, and no more.
>
> THEAETETUS: That is certainly the best and wisest state of mind.
>
> STRANGER: For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we must admit that refutation is the greatest and chiefest of purifications, and he who has not been refuted, though he be the Great King himself, is in an awful state of impurity; he is uninstructed and deformed in those things in which he who would be truly blessed ought to be fairest and purest. (Plato, *Soph.* 230b4-e5, translated by Jowett, 1892).

The Elenctic Purification

This technique aims at the purification of the soul, in the etymological sense of making the soul limpid and pure (*katharos*), free from the mistakes which do not allow a correct vision. The

logical reasoning[2] (a note on the principle of non-contradiction can be found in 230b7-9) and the volitional and desiderative disposition of the soul cooperate to achieve this objective, and emotions play a crucial role in this integrated functionality. As it has been stressed by Blank (1993), Socrates manipulates the emotions in order to enhance the impact of the argument towards the interlocutor. Rhetoricians were fully aware of the efficacy of this kind of procedure. Nevertheless, Plato will confer to it a new flavor, putting it at service of purification and knowledge.

In this passage, the parallelism with medicine is explicit: purifiers extirpate impediments rooted in the soul that, besides creating pain, do not allow it to generate knowledge, in the same way in which doctors purge the body (230c5-8). The health of the soul is what gives happiness, the *eudaimonia* that makes man "truly blessed", as in Jowett's translation, and this state can be achieved only by knowing the Good. For reaching this achievement it is necessary to get rid of errors first. *Elenchus* therefore takes on in this passage a therapeutic or even educational function, if by education we mean a set of practices aiming at the improvement of their recipient. In BLIND (2015b) I demonstrated that the concept of harmony is a distinctive feature of both medical and philosophical practices. Bodily diseases, misery, madness and the ignorance of the soul, meteorological disorder, religious impiety and hubris (from an ethical and political perspective) are all expressions of an infringement of the harmonic law regulating the universe. Consequently, a technique that can recreate harmony, taking as a model celestial harmony, is necessary. Arguably, in the passage under discussion, *elenchus* aims at recreating precisely this internal harmony among the parts constituting the soul, infranged by the intellectual disorder of contradictions.

The remedy, which in our passage works as a purgative, is often bitter and unpleasant. In fact, the adopted method could be even defined as homeopathic (Larivée, 2007, pp. 317-324), since it cures the disease with the disease: in order to expel error from the interlocutor's soul, Socrates is forced to use violent strategies similar to those of the sophists, whom he criticizes in several passages. The difference should be found in Socrates' aim, that is always paideutic: the interlocutor must be liberated from errors in order to be able to generate the knowledge leading to the good. It is

possible to find interesting passages on this topic in the *Gorgias* (476d-477a, 477e-478c, 478e-479c): for example when Socrates argues that the righteous man must accept corrections (*kolazesthai*) and receive a purge or a punishment (*kolasis*), which will be as painful as the medicine is beneficial to a sick body.

Notably, the most effective form of purification for humans is accessible in a dialogic context, that is a practice embedded within social interactions. In fact, *elenchus* is the main strategy of the Socratic dialogue, which – albeit often unfolding as a dialogue between two individuals – also implies the presence of listeners who serve as an echo, mirror and receptacle for the process of purification, as we will see in the next section.

Private and Public *Elenchus*

Transforming oneself, as attaining the right harmony between the parts of the soul, is achievable through the help of others. In the Socratic elenchus, nevertheless, the help may be unpleasant in the first place, since it functions as a recognition of one's own inadequacy. In fact, the audience amplifies the elenctic effect, providing the interlocutor with a mirror. Only the judging gaze of the other enables the soul to experience the shame which is necessary to emancipate the soul from its defective state. Furthermore, the elenctic release is sweet to those who, by listening, witness its unfolding (230 c3). Arguably, the *elenchus* possesses the power to transform – albeit in a lesser measure – the opinions of the audience. This mechanism is precisely the "outreach *elenchus*", a pedagogical and political tool, created by Plato's writing, which comes into action when the interlocutor is not willing to accept his shame. Specifically, dialogical interactions are performed within the social domain (Brisson 2009) and, thus, philosophy, within the Socratic and Platonic heritage, is a practice that pertains to the social world and embraces pedagogical and political aims as well. Plato's writing has been studied a lot in the last decades by many scholars. Among them, Gill (2006) has claimed that Plato's writing performs a maieutic function directed to the readers. What I would emphasize here is that specific literary strategies are employed by Plato to attain the maieutic goal, and in the elenctic machinery I recognize one of them.

In *Gorgias* 471e-472c, Socrates tells Polus that there are two types of *elenchus*, the rhetorical one, which is typically used in tribunals, and the dialectical one, used by Socrates himself. Whilst the first is valid only if it involves a great number of witnesses, in the second case it is sufficient that one witness recognizes the truth. This difference is due to both the mode of operating of Socrates' maieutics, which addresses one interlocutor at a time, and the Socratic refusal to seek consensus in the general public as did the rhetors and politicians of the time. Socrates is aware that the *elenchus* affects the audience as well, and Plato displays the same awareness, as demonstrated by his rhetorical use of emotions, and in particular of shame. The author does not state explicitly these dynamics for two reasons: in order to mark a difference from rhetors, sophists and politicians of his time, and to secure the efficacy of the implemented strategy. In fact, if the interlocutor was aware of the extension of the *elenchus* he would not agree to say openly what he thinks.

Aidos **and** ***Aischyne***

Purification is not possible without shame. Therefore, cleansing the soul from wrong opinions is not a purely rational process, but an operation involving the whole dimensions of personality, including the emotional level. Shame, thus, assumes a moral valence and, as Moss (2005) has clearly stated, its function is in agreement with reasoning. My thesis is that the moral value of valence resides in its cleansing power within the elenchus and, therefore, it should be understood as a pedagogical tool (Renaud 2012) devoted to the moral improvement of the interlocutors.

Jowett translates *aischyne* (significantly, this term appears in 230d2) as modesty. The translation certainly outlines one fundamental facet of the process of purification, which is well captured by the Latin concept of *pudor*. However, in my opinion, it does not emphasize enough the aspect of shameful dishonor implied by the term – an aspect that the word *aischyne* shares with the term *aidos*. In its passive form, the verb *aischyno* immediately recalls the act of blushing, the physical manifestation of the emotional state of shame. Shame and blushing express modesty and

the interlocutor's embarrassment in admitting personal positions or beliefs that have been revealed. Interlocutors blush also when they have to admit things that they would rather keep to themselves or when they are ashamed of their inability to respond. Arguably, by using the term *aischyne*, Plato intentionally refers to this entire phenomenological horizon, depicting in the meantime the physical, the cognitive, and the social dimension of feelings.

In the *Sophist*, the term *aidos* appears in two very interesting passages opening the dialogue (216 b1 e 217 d8). The first refers to a Homeric verse in which the god of hospitality favors those men who manifest a fair modesty, and underlines how the gods observe human behaviors, be these transgressive (*hybreis*) or law-abiding. Thus, Plato connects the feeling of shame to the divine - it is useful to point out here that *Aidos* is a goddess for Hesiod. He frames it in antithesis to *hybris* and encircles both terms in a social dimension, concerning compliance with the laws. As it has been stressed by Cairns (1996), *aidos* is strictly related to values, and to the adequate behavior for respond to the honor of both the self and others. The second passage emphasizes the embarrassment of the Stranger from Elea, endowing his character with a positive attribute.

Shame is traditionally considered a virtue of children and women, and opposed to *andreia*, courage, typical of men. Young Charmides, a character in the homonymous dialogue, well represents the emotion of shame-modesty in its close connection with *sophrosyne*. The effect of the *elenchus* is therefore meekness and docility, but also, more significantly, wisdom. Thus, it is true that Socrates is not this teacher that through questioning leads the students to the right answers (Magrini 2014), but this do not mean that the aim of his practice is not paideutic. For example, referring to the *Charmides* (167a) and *Theaetetus* (210b-c), Dorion (2000) underlines how this aspect can be found in the *Corpus Platonicum*, and how the texts attribute to the *elenchus* the ability to make people sober. In these two passages, as in the one presently under analysis, *sophrosyne* is the awareness of ignorance. In the *Republic*, as anticipated, it is connected to the right harmony between the parts of the soul. Therefore, thanks to *aischyne*, it is possible to detect an interesting connection between *elenchus* and *sophrosyne*.

However, also male virtues are necessary: for example, the courage to get exposed to a violent method and the courage to accept its consequences, becoming angry with himself. There are, however, very few cases of interlocutors who accept such a challenge, and this is traditionally considered as the "failure" of the Socratic Method.

In my opinion, whilst the failed purification of the interlocutor can be considered a drawback, the procedure obtains nonetheless an important result on the socio-political level. The diffusion of the confutation (through the "outreach *elenchus*") can take place precisely insofar as the interlocutor does not accept his confutation: the audience, witnessing the interlocutor's unwillingness to accept his shame, can be made aware of his inadequacy. Failure about the interlocutor's purification acquires thus a positive valence thanks to the "outreach *elenchus*" – a strategy that, in my opinion, is sought after by Plato, in some cases, even more than the *katharsis* of the individual interlocutor.

The interplay between success and failure characterizing the Socratic Method can arguably be understood only by approaching the political dimension of Plato's dialogues within a wider horizon. Shame itself – a crucial condition for the transformation of the interlocutor and the audience – is in fact a social emotion, which connects recognition of the self and recognition of the other. The role of shame is understandable only if referred to the relation between the individual and the social context that judges his attitude.

Whether or not the interlocutor accepts the refutation depends on the type of person he is, the kind of role he plays, and the kind of relationship he has with Socrates. Moreover, dialogues were not private, but public conversations. Acceptance of the refutation therefore had a social value, in the building up of the social identity. It is necessary to consider here the role of social status for the Greeks – in particular, the way in which status was constitutive of individual identity. In this perspective, accepting a public refutation could imply accepting a change of identity. Moreover, not only in Homeric society, but also in the 5th-4th century, military values were very important. By accepting a public refutation, the interlocutor admits defeat: for Socrates' hostile interlocutors, the

dialogue is not a collaborative effort, but a battle. Adopting Dodds' terminology (Dodds 1951), it is possible to maintain that this kind of Socratic interlocutors display residual elements of the values typical of a "shame-culture", in which social recognition held primary importance.

Concealed and Manifest Shame

Not only does shame operate in different domains, such as the epistemological, psychological and rhetorical-social domains, it also presents different typologies. The first differentiation to be made is the one between shame as a tool of transformation, which conduces to the generative phase of maieutic (the very one described in the passage of the *Sophist* we have just analyzed) and shame as an obstacle to transformation – an obstacle which, however, functions as a resonator for the audience (generating thus the "outreach *elenchus*").

We will now analyze some passages of the *Gorgias* in order to capture further nuances related to the meaning of shame in regard to the categories of "concealing" and "manifesting".

In the passage reporting the exchange between Gorgias and Polus, both acting as Socrates's interlocutors, Polus (461c) says that Gorgias, feeling ashamed to admit that he didn't know what justice is (and, therefore, being unable to teach this concept) has fallen into contradiction. As a matter of fact, a few lines above (458b4-c2), Gorgias had accepted the Socratic Method, but shortly afterwards he invents an excuse – he does not want to bore the audience – for hiding his inability to explain the concept, thereby showing that he is not putting the method into practice. It is Polus, one of the listeners, who reveals Gorgias' shame. Polus has undergone the effects of the "outreach *elenchus*", which has allowed him to unveil the dissimulating technique of his teacher.

Callicles, the third of Socrates's interlocutors, also recognizes the mechanism from his position of listener (BLIND, 2014): he underlines how Gorgias and Polus have been compelled to accept the Socratic position because of shame. Callicles recognised exactly the passage in the dialogue where Polus has fallen and has therefore "[…] got entangled in your argument and had his mouth stopped, being ashamed to say what he thought." (*Gorgias*, 482 e1-2. Translated by Jowett, 1892).

Polus could not say what he was thinking, because this would have been in contradiction with what he had admitted previously under Socratic's pressure. Polus' shame, therefore, doesn't stem from the content of his thoughts, but from the clear contradiction that would have arisen had he expressed them. In this case, he would have clearly produced his own confutation. Shame, in this case, stems from the consciousness of having been confuted and the unwillingness to admit it. "Concealing" generates the mechanism of "outreach *elenchus*": according to the theory expressed in the *Sophist*, shame can purify the interlocutors only when it becomes evident, as happens in the case of Polus with Gorgias and then of Callicles with both. Analyzing the machinery through which shame is conciled, it is possible to notice a further effect generated by "outreach *elenchus*": not only does it purify the audience, it also affects the interlocutors who are the object of the confutation. It bounces back and obliges them to recognize the shame they had concealed.

Notably, with Callicles, Socrates uses another strategy of refutation. He knows that Callicles is not interested in appearing as a just and fair person, since he disdains social norms (in 482 d3-4 he states that shame is the feeling generated by transgressing societal rules) and he identifies transgression as the very character that can make him loved by people. Therefore, in developing the dialogue, Socrates does not aim to show Callicles the contradictory character of his own thesis, as Callicles is not motivated by the desire of changing his mode of life. Socrates seeks rather to oblige him to explicitly express all the consequences of such a mode of life. The interlocutor is invited in this case to express all his thoughts without feeling ashamed (directly in 494 c4-5, indirectly in 492 d1-3). Callicles believes that if the interlocutor freely expressed his thoughts, his discourse would not be contradictory: only if he conceals something out of shame does he fall into contradiction. Socrates' strategy presents an inverse structure: if the interlocutor said all he thinks, the contradiction would clearly appear and, thanks to the feeling of shame, he could be purified.

This type of shame is obtained through an exhortation to be brave (the bond between not feeling ashamed and being brave is clearly expressed by Socrates in 494 d 4), to say what one thinks or to do what one does fearlessly; this solicitation is very similar, in its structure, to the kind

of shame present in the Homeric poems – a shame that takes up, sometimes, the characteristic form of a "battle cry".

Although he is a character far from Homeric heroes as far as values and the political context are concerned, Callicles is similar to them for his stubbornness, tenacity and self-confidence. As a matter of fact, Callicles responds promptly to Socrates' request, manifesting his own convictions and manner of thinking almost lavishly. Socrates appeals to this kind of shame (analogous to the epic warrior's sense of honour when confronted with the call to arms) in order to make sure Callicles' thought unfolds clearly and can be perceived by the listeners and the audience for what it is: a wrongful way of thinking and a wrong style of life.

Socrates wants Callicles' thought to reveal its contradictory character; he doesn't want shame restraining Callicles from saying what he thinks (as it was the case for Gorgias and Polus)**;** this is why he evokes the value of bravery as an appeal not to feel ashamed of one's own thoughts.

But it is exactly this appeal to not feeling ashamed which will conduct Callicles to a more radical form of shame: the shame of self-contradiction. Probably this will not be of any interest for Callicles. Here the issue that is raised regards the possibility for Socratic intellectualism to be effective vis-à-vis those refusing to acknowledge the principle of non-contradiction as basis for their reasoning. This problem will drive Plato, in the *Republi*c, to pursue in eudaimonism the reasons to prefer truth to contradiction as a mode of life. It is maybe by chance that the last part of our passage refers to *eudaimonia,* but it is very significant for understanding that Socratic *elenchus* would gain extra strength if considered as an educational method within the perspective of the Good.

The option offered by the "outreach *elenchus*" to the failure of the interlocutor's purification remains an opportunity in Plato's hands. Nevertheless, this option is undermined by incertitude. Will the audience be able to listen to the voice of truth, demonstrating the contradiction of the thesis and Callicles' style of life, or will it be enchanted by the power of a *hybristes* man promising freedom from the laws?

Conclusion

For Plato, the task of education is not only to purify one from the influence of "bad teachers", but also to form worthy men (the project of the Academy) able to follow the right laws (the project that accompanied Plato into his old age, and that led him to write the *Laws*). The purification inherent to Socratic dialogue as exercise of critical thinking, nevertheless, should be understood as the ground for the most positive kind of education developed furthermore by Plato in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*. As I have underlined, Socratic refutation integrates the emotional experience within the cognitive processes in order to judge the correctness of a given thesis for the interlocutor's life. That's why cross-examination may be a precise instrument of moral education, addressing not only the individual interlocutor but also society as a whole (through the "outreach *elenchus*").

Callicles' case, however, demonstrates how the Socratic method does not exhaust the Platonic *paideia*. *Paideia* is in fact the lodestar which has always guided Plato's research – a research which unfolded as a continuous definition of philosophy, aiming at reforming the politics of his days, and at educating a new man. The experience of purification through shame is at the basis of the Platonic *paideia* and, thus, shame may acquire a positive value within this framework only. However, from this perspective, shame loses its commonsensical connection with guilt and blame and becomes a practice of self-purification that must be pursued within an ethical horizon. Furthermore, the role played by shame in the "outreach *elenchus*" may be understood today as a practice of resistance and criticism against power. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine in the present situation, after the century of totalitarianism, the Good that according to Plato should provide the proper orientation for political action. Finally, an inherent issue belongs to the "outreach elenchus", since it could be easily exploited by the contemporary "culture industry" (Turnaturi, 2012). For Plato, shame was able to assume a constructive meaning, insofar as it was experienced within a cosmos where ethical and political values represented the main points of reference for educative and political practices. The experience of shame, thus, acquired its meaning within the

horizon of restorative justice[3] and healing. Nowadays, the situation is certainly different. However, it is precisely for this reason that the past, if correctly interrogated, can be a source of inspiration for the present. In fact, if we are able to emancipate ourselves from the various layers of meaning that shame has assumed throughout our history, and to understand its primordial meaning, linked to the one of the Goddess *Aidos* that asks to nurture humility as intellectual and moral virtue, we will also be able to recover its fundamental role as an instrument of education, intended here as a purifying endeavor.

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[1] I am in agreement with Bowery for whom blushing is a turning point, where real possibilities to have a dialogic evolution arise. Cf. Bowery, 2007, pp. 82-110.

[2] Several studies have been conducted, especially in the analytical domain, in relation to argumentation in Plato and the elenctic technique; it has been noted that the logic present in Plato's dialogues is not perfect and, from a formal point of view, the *elenchus* itself presents some shortcomings. Cf. Vlastos, 1983, pp. 27-58.

3 Benade (2015) has depicted in these terms the role that shame may assume within the contemporary educational practice. In fact, the moral stance of shame can be regarded to reflect a form of social responsibility and restorative justice.